

# Special Educational Needs: A Guide for Parents

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## **About the Guide**

Research has clearly shown that when parents become involved in the education of their children it benefits students, parents, teachers and schools at any level. This is because parents are the first educators in the house, they are also partners with the school and advocates for all children and youth in society.

The parents, however, have a significant need for a variety of pertinent and important information for bringing up their children with SEN. Many parents of children with SEN may not be having the specific knowledge about the services available and also about how to derive benefits from these services. **Special Educational Needs: A Guide for Parents** has been developed to give wealth of practical advice to parents of children with SEN.

Filled with practical suggestions, this guide takes parents through the various stages required in understanding the processes of early childhood intervention, procedures for school going children and problems of adolescence and the affect on family relationships. The guide also answers some questions that often occur in the parents' mind.

The guide has been developed after holding frequent interactions with parents of children with SEN. A Guide like this in parents' hands facilitate the process of assuring that the children with SEN receives appropriate education in an appropriate environment. Also, attitudes developed along the way by both parents and child creates increased feelings of self-worth and enhances self-esteem. This in turn strengthens the parent-child relationship. The parents' feel satisfied that they are able to help their child. The children sense that their parents are truly interested in their developed and this feeling of being wanted helps the child to meet any challenge in his/her life.



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# **Introduction**

Many children during their school years may have special educational needs (SEN). Most children's special needs would be met by the ordinary mainstream schools, sometimes with the help of outside specialists (special educators/psychologists) or specialists within the school.

This guide developed by the National Council of Educational Research and Training aims to help parents' to-

- Understand what SEN are
- Understand what schools, government and other professionals can do and should do
- Play a full part in the child's education

## **Basic Principles**

There are some basic points that have to be kept in the mind while you read this guide:

1. All children having SEN including children with disabilities have a right to a broad and well-balanced education. This should include as much work as possible under the Curriculum.
2. Children under five who have SEN also need preparation for education. The parents can get advice from the Early Childhood Centers of Education (ECCE) if they exist in their surroundings, from non-governmental organizations, special schools, specialists or any other child health services.
3. As a parent you have an important role to play in deciding which school is right for your child.





4. As far as possible most of the children can be educated in regular schools. The schools in the neighbourhood with the help of specialists and community supports will be able to meet a good number of children's needs.
5. Some children with SEN may go to a nearby special school. They may have to go to a special school for only sometime before they are ready for an ordinary school or may have to stay in a special school for a longer period depending on their needs.
6. Your own knowledge, views and experiences as parents are vital in helping your child to develop. Your child is likely to make progress if you, your child, the school, the government officials, community and the other community institutions all work together in partnerships. You and your child can also get help from a wide range of services including the voluntary organizations. You have to explore the possibilities of getting help in your neighbourhood.
7. Your hope, expectations and attitude are contagious. It means that if you believe that you can do it and must do it, only then your child can succeed. You must never give up before you start. You must come out of your despair and start finding out ways to help your child.

You, as parents, have every right to take part in all the decisions about your child's education. Your support is very essential. If you have any worries about the child you must share them with the child's teacher or with any professionals/specialists working with the child as well as with your friends and family. For example if you get worried about the help the child is getting at school, you should speak about this to his/ her teacher or even to the headmistress. Sharing your worries is very important.





You can facilitate your child's progress by keeping in touch with the teachers. Also, remember, the more positively you think about your child's development, the more confidence your child will develop. Consider the following two cases and draw your own opinion:

*Seeta, a five-year-old girl was discovered to be having problems with hearing. When her parents came to know about it they felt shocked and mourned her condition by crying in front of their neighbours, relatives etc. It appeared that a death had taken place in the family. The family members never smiled, never attended any social gatherings and stayed away from most of the people. Gradually, they secluded themselves from their community and started living in isolation. Seeta was considered to be a big burden right from the beginning. She was neither considered fit to attend the school in the neighbourhood nor she was allowed to play with children of her age. This affected Seeta's self-esteem to a great extent and she became a bundle of isolation staying indoors all the time. Her hearing impairment became a major handicap for her development because of her parents' attitude.*

Seeta is a victim of rejecting attitude of her parents. Her hearing impairment became a major barrier for her holistic development. She was capable of gaining education in a normal school with the help of aids and equipment. She was denied this right because of her parent's negative thinking. Seeta's parents neither sought any professional help nor they had any expectations from Seeta. Now compare Seeta's case with the following case:



*Meena was born with visual impairment. This was a shock to her parents and they blamed themselves for committing some sins in their past for this to have happened. Gradually they overcame their shock and accepting Meena's impairment as only a part of her life, they decided to give her education in an appropriate school. They went to a number of people and organizations that guided them about what all Meena could do in spite of her visual impairment and how they could help her in realizing her potential.*

*The positive attitude of the parents really helped her in getting early help and she could join the regular school with full preparation. The parents regularly interacted with the teacher and informed her about what Meena could do and what she couldn't do. They described what were Meena's problems and special needs and helped the teacher to develop some short-term objectives to achieve long-term goals. They also helped the school to achieve these goals by providing support in whatever way they could. Meena mixed well with her schoolmates. She participated in most of the activities in whatever way she could. The high expectations of the parents were communicated to the teachers who in turn developed high expectations from this child. The teachers checked her copy regularly and respected her for the strengths Meena possessed. Meena had a number of friends and her condition of visual impairment in no way became a barrier to her growth and development.*

Now can you realize the difference parents' attitude can make to the child?





## **Rights of your child**

There have been the three legislative Acts – the Persons with Disabilities (Equal opportunities, Protection of rights and Full participation) Act, 1995, Rehabilitation Council of India Act, 1992, and the National Trust for Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities Act, 1999 for education and rehabilitation of children with SEN.

The Persons with Disabilities (Equal Participation & Opportunities) Act 1995 gives a number of rights to your child. Some of these rights in the field of education are:

- ❑ A right to free education in an appropriate environment till s/he attains the age of eighteen years.
- ❑ A right to access part-time classes of the children who have completed education upto Class V and could not continue their studies on whole-time basis.
- ❑ A right to functional literacy if s/he is in the age group of sixteen and above
- ❑ Education through open schools
- ❑ Free of cost special books and equipments
- ❑ Transport facilities or alternative financial incentives to parents and guardians for attending school
- ❑ Barrier free environment in schools, colleges or other institutions, imparting vocational and professional training
- ❑ Supply of books, uniforms and other materials
- ❑ Grant of scholarship
- ❑ Amanuensis or a writer in case of visual impairment





The above rights have to be provided by the appropriate governments and the local authorities. In case, the parents face any problems they can appeal to the Chief Commissioner Disabilities, Ministry of Social Justice & Environment, New Delhi. Alternatively, they can also go to 'Commissioner' Disabilities if a commissioner has been appointed at the State level. Till now approximately 5000 cases of violation of rights have been dealt with under this legislation.

Whenever a government school refuses to admit your child you can complain to the commissioner, disabilities or the chief commissioner disabilities. If you come across a number of such cases you can encourage formation of pressure groups of parents and bring a number of changes in the existing system. Some of the important terms defined in the Act are:

**"Person with disability"** means a person suffering from not less than forty per cent of any disability as certified by a medical authority;

**"Hearing impairment,"** means loss of sixty decibels or more in the better ear in the conversational range of frequencies;

**"Loco motor disability"** means disability of the bones, joints or muscles leading to substantial restriction of the movement of the limbs or any form of cerebral palsy;

**"Mental retardation"** means a condition of arrested or incomplete development of mind of a person, which is specially characterized by sub normality of intelligence;

**"Person with low vision"** means a person with impairment of visual functioning even after treatment or standard refractive correction but who uses or is potentially capable of using vision for the planning or execution of a task with appropriate assistive device;



## Schemes and Benefits

There is a centrally sponsored scheme of the Government called the Scheme for Integrated Education for the Disabled Children (IEDC) that provides 100 per cent financial assistance to schools both Government and private and also run by NGOs for integrating children with disabilities into regular schools.



The scheme provides a number of benefits like:

- Expenses on books and stationery
- Expenses on uniform
- Transport allowance
- Reader allowance for the blind children after Class V
- Escort allowance
- Expenses on equipment
- Attendant for severely orthopaedically disabled children
- Boarding and lodging charges for residing in the hostel
- A special pay to a helper (ayah) for severally orthopaedically disabled children if residing in the hostel.

In addition, the scheme also provides for special teacher support except for children with locomotor disabilities. Training of other staff, resource room, removal of architectural barriers for giving better access and instructional materials are all covered under the scheme. The scheme also emphasizes linkages with health, labour & welfare etc. The schools that want to include SEN but lack the infrastructure and trained staff can ask for financial provisions under the scheme from Department of Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Shastri Bhawan, New Delhi.



Over one hundred districts have been identified by the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment for providing primary composite rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities. Over 25 Centres have already become functional. A four tier-scheme namely, National Programme for Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities has been started in the State sector for implementation in order to create infrastructure at State/ District/ Block and Gram Panchayat level for providing comprehensive rehabilitation services to the children with SEN. The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment is setting up Composite Regional Centres (CRCs) in different parts of the country to provide services for different kinds of disabilities and for creating infrastructure for training and manpower development. Regional Rehabilitation Centres (RRCs) for persons with spinal injuries and orthopaedic disabilities are being set up as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme. Four Auxiliary Production Centres of Artificial Limb Manufacturing Corporation of India (ALIMCO) are being set up to expand the production capacity and for easy availability of quality aids and appliances.

The newly constituted National Trust for Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities is introducing schemes for providing social security as well as developmental support to the most marginalized section among the persons with disabilities. Local level committees are being set up under the Chairpersonship of the District Collector in all districts of the country that will monitor and facilitate implementation of National Trust's schemes and appoint guardians to the needy persons belonging to these categories. You can find more details about this from Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment.





In consonance with the policy of providing a complete package of welfare services and to effectively deal with the multi dimensional problems of the disabled population, the following National Institutes/ apex level institutions have been set up in each major area of disability: -

- ❖ National Institute for the Visually Handicapped, Dehradun.
- ❖ National Institute for the Orthopaedically Handicapped, Kolkata.
- ❖ Ali Yavar Jung National Institute for the Hearing Handicapped, Mumbai.
- ❖ National Institute for the Mentally Handicapped, Secunderabad.
- ❖ National Institute for Rehabilitation Training and Research, Cuttack.
- ❖ Institute for the Physically Handicapped, New Delhi.

These Institutes have been staffed with talented professionals and equipped with modern and scientific equipment. The thrust areas of the National Institutes are manpower development, development of models of service delivery programmes for rehabilitation, reaching services to the unreached through outreach activities and research and development.





The Persons with Disabilities (Equal Participation & Opportunities) Act, 1995 which has been mentioned before has a provision in chapter IV (d) to provide training to the staff in the Primary Health Centres (PHCs) to help create better service facilities in the country. The Primary Health Centre (PHC) network in India is wide spread, covers the rural areas adequately and has the necessary minimum infrastructure to provide various services for the people living in rural areas.



The Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment initiated the District Rehabilitation Centre Scheme during 1985, to provide comprehensive rehabilitation services to the rural disabled at their doorsteps in 11 districts of the country. These centers provide services for prevention and early detection, medical intervention and surgical correction, fitment of artificial aids and appliances, therapeutical services such as physiotherapy, occupational and speech therapy, provision of training for acquisition of skills through vocational training, job placement in local industries etc. You can find out if there is any centre like this in your neighbourhood.

Under the ADIP Scheme, aids and appliances are being provided to the persons with disabilities all over the country. The scope of this scheme has been enlarged to include use of Mass Media, Exhibitions, Workshops etc., for exchange of information, promoting awareness and distribution & use of aids/ appliances. A number of voluntary organizations have taken up this task in the country.



The voluntary organizations in the country are also running a variety of schemes viz. rehabilitation centers for leprosy-cured persons, institution for manpower development in the field of mental retardation & cerebral palsy, establishment and running of special schools for children with disabilities.

The government has also undertaken a number of initiatives in the field of education and education of children with SEN is a major component of all these endeavours. These initiatives are:

- Covering all districts by Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan
- Extending of District Primary Education Programme to 271 districts (Department of Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2001)
- New initiatives in Integrated Student Development Services scheme that has already covered nearly 5171 blocks (Department of Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2001)
- Increasing coverage under the centrally sponsored scheme of Integrated education for the Disabled

## **What are Special Educational Needs (SEN)?**

In our country, we still do not have a legal definition of SEN. However, there are many countries and experts who have defined this term. For example, Department for Education, U.K. defines it in the following way:

“A child has special educational needs if he or she has learning difficulties and needs special help. A child has learning difficulties if he or she finds it much harder to learn than most children of the same age, or if he or she has a disability which makes it difficult to use the normal educational facilities in the area”.

*Special Educational Needs- A Guide for Parents, Department for Education Publication pg 5, London, U.K.*



According to James Lynch (1994) "Special educational needs" comprehends a range of children in the following three categories:



- Children who are currently enrolled in primary school, but for various reasons do not progress adequately.
- Children who are currently not enrolling in primary school, but who could be enrolled if schools were more responsive.
- The relatively smaller group of children with severe physical, mental or multiple impairments who have complex SEN that are not being met.

Children with SEN thus include children with situational disadvantages, due to malnutrition, child labour and other factors associated with poverty as well as children with impairments in movement, hearing, speech and language, vision, intellectual abilities and emotional problems and any combination of impairment (pg.1, 2)

For example, your child may have SEN or learning difficulties caused by:

- A problem with sight, hearing or speech
- A physical disability
- A intellectual disability
- Emotional or behaviour problems
- A medical or health problem





These are just a few examples. Your child may have some general difficulties with schoolwork like in reading, writing or mathematics. You may notice these problems yourself or the teachers at school may notice them and inform you. Sometimes the child's friends at school may tell you about them. These problems may occur while the child is at school or even before your child starts school.

Some children may get over these problems soon. For some other children these difficulties may last for a longer time.







## **Assessment**

Assessment refers to a very detailed examination, which indicates what your child's SEN are, and all the special help s/he may need. For deriving any benefits under various schemes and for providing appropriate education, it is important to get your child assessed with the help of medical personnel, psychologist, special educator, speech therapist etc. depending on the needs of the child. For gaining access to any provisions under the governmental scheme it is important to produce a certificate that spells out the degree or severity of the problem. This formal assessment is important for gaining admission in a special school also.

Assessment therefore is an important and integral part of any school education programme. According to Brown (1988) assessment has multiple purposes:

- Assessment must be closely integrated with the curriculum and should provide valid information about what has been achieved.



- It should help learners and others to make sensible choices about educational courses and careers.
- It should allow for the diagnosis of failure and the re-design of learning opportunities to rectify such failure.
- It should motivate learners to learn.
- It should assist teachers to adapt the curriculum and their teaching methods to all learners; i.e., it has a *formative* purpose.
- It should provide feedback to learners and parents.
- It should enable judgments to be made about the quality of learning in the overall educational system.

Once the child is already in a school or even at the pre-school level there is a need for functional assessment that can be done by a team of professionals and parents of the child. The team may include a teacher, a special teacher, para professionals like a speech therapist, school administrator, parents of the child etc. Peer group participation is also important in the assessment process. Assessment in this framework has multiple purposes including finding out the learning strengths and difficulties of the child.

While assessing the child it is important to consider the environment in which the child will be learning as environment plays a very critical role in the child's overall development. This interaction between the learner and the environment has sometimes been referred to as the ecology of learning. Assessment has also the benefit of making the teacher aware of the child's SEN.

As it has been said:

"Every child in every form of early years provision is a learner with a right to equality of learning opportunity. If observation of children can increase educators' understanding, enrich curricular provision, and improve the match between individual children's development and the provision made for them, then observation and assessment must be part of the provision in every group setting for young children outside the home".

(Drummond and Nutbrown, 1992, p 91)



The Coordinator of the centrally sponsored scheme IEDC is actually responsible for arranging for the assessment of children and monitoring their progress. The scheme makes the provision for appointing a 3-member team comprising a doctor, a psychologist and a special educator. Members of the assessment team would be given T.A. as per State Government/ UT administration rules.

According to the scheme, decision regarding whether the child can be put directly into school or receive preparation in a special school/special preparatory class in the ECCE r is based on the assessment report. Teacher can carry out functional assessment if formal assessment is to take a long time so that educational programme can be started for these children.

## **Benefits of parent involvement for children with SEN**

Research has shown that when parents get involved in the education of their child, it benefits the child himself/herself, parents themselves, teachers and the school at any level of child's education. Parents are the child's best advocates. You as parents can help the family to take important decisions, as you know what is helpful for your child and what is not. You also know what your child likes and what s/he doesn't and what are his/her interests.

What then are reasons for parents' contribution being so important? Some of them are given below:

- Referral of the child for early intervention services becomes possible
- Teachers have a better morale and motivation
- Children can complete their assignments on time
- Children have a positive attitude towards school
- Children perform better at school
- Parents become more supportive of children
- Parents also learn a lot about ways to help children learn

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- Teachers plans their interventions better
- Teachers understand the child better
- Child's morale will remain high leading to better learning now and in future
- Child will remain happy if his/her parents remain happy



You as parents can play a very important role in your child's development. You are the first educators at home and you can develop partnerships with your child's school and even advocate for your child.

You as parents can function as:

- ★ Information providers – you can exchange information about your child with the teacher and the school.





★ Teachers – you are the first teacher for the child. Home learning activities can really benefit the child. These can build self-confidence and strengthen the relationship between the parents and the child.

★ Advisors, decision-makers and advocates – parents can share their views about their child with the teachers, and administrators. This can positively influence decisions on issues that affect their children.

In addition, parents are the most caring, loving force in the child's life. Emotional support provided to the child helps in building up a positive self-concept. Parents must find out more from parents of other children with similar problems. Sharing is a must as one learns a lot from each other.







## **Children under Five**

If your child is under five years of age and exhibits some problems, you must speak to a doctor or any health worker, social worker, any one else who may be able to help in your community. Never Delay in taking advice about your child. Early years of your child are very important. In case, you are not able to get help for the child in his/her early years, it may adversely affect his/her growth and development and his/her later success in school. A specialist advice is the first step you must take.

If your child has some SEN you can consult a local voluntary organization for help and advice. The government has made a number of provisions regarding the education of children with special needs. You can try to contact some knowledgeable persons in your community for advice. For example, a respected teacher, a helpful government official, social worker, or specialists from nearby voluntary organizations, can mediate between you and the government authorities for planning good education for your child



## **Help before starting school**

You must feel concerned if your child is-

- Not rolling, walking or moving like other children of the same age
- Not talking or talking differently from other children
- Having problems in seeing or hearing
- Too active or not active enough

Having any one of the problems mentioned above means that your child needs an early intervention programme and special attention of a specialist. You also need to understand how to meet the special needs of your child. These services can be provided at home, in the day care centres or in any other community institutions like the Bal Wadis or Angad Wadis. The government has a scheme called the Early Child Care and Education (ECCE) that deals with early intervention for the education of children. You can find out if there is any programme running under this scheme or under any other scheme in your neighbourhood.

Early intervention for your child will require:

- Medical services
- Early identification or screening
- Special instructions
- Social work services
- Training of Anganwadis, Balwadis or ECCE workers
- Family training, counseling, home visits
- Services of specialists like Psychologist, Speech Therapist etc.

You can find out about the availability of services for pre-school in your neighbourhood. In addition to the services mentioned above you can seek help from other sources.



For example:

- Special teachers, if there are any, in a special school or otherwise. They can visit you at home if your child has hearing, sight, or learning difficulties
- Home-based learning schemes under Community Based Rehabilitation Programme. Under this specialists can provide help and advice to you at home.
- Other parents of children with special needs who may have knowledge about this from their experience.
- Voluntary organizations in the neighbourhood dealing directly or indirectly with children's education and rehabilitation

Sometimes there may be teachers/personnel at ECCE, Balwadis etc. willing to help but may be ignorant about what has to be done. In that case you can yourself collect some information and help them to impart better education not only to your child but to other children as well.









## **Children going to School**

If your child is at school, and has some special educational/learning needs, you must talk to your child's teacher or the head teacher. There may be a teacher in your child's school either permanently or visiting, who has the special responsibility for children having SEN. You must interact regularly with the child's teacher and also with the special teacher. There is also a possibility that there may be no special teacher available in the school.

You must, however, remain active partners with your child's school. In case there is no specialist available to advice the teachers for how to meet the SEN of the child, you must try to find one who can help the teachers in the school. You must show interest in the progress of your child by keeping yourself informed. The school should be ready to listen to your concerns and work with you to make sure that the child gets proper education. When your child enters a new school, you must make sure that the school has all the provisions to meet the needs of the child. The school can also make provisions for holding



parent teacher meetings more frequently so that the parents know about the progress of their child. You must be vigilant about the day-to-day routine of your child in the school. Supposing you find that your child who is unable to hear properly is made to sit at the back of the classroom and is not able to lip read then you must go to the teacher and ask her to help your child to access classroom teaching as best as possible. Never think that your child is lucky to get whatever education s/he is getting even if it is inferior education. Never let anybody else think in this way. In no way your child is different from any other child except for having some SEN. Have high expectations from your child and communicate them to your child's teachers and even to your child. Parents must assert themselves to get the best benefits for their child. You must tell your child's teacher about the special help being provided by other schools or voluntary organizations or a social worker in the neighbourhood if there is a need. Do not hesitate to put a point across if it could benefit your child.

You may sometimes find that there may be voluntary organizations not very near your house. These may be situated a bit away from you. Even in that case, you must take your child there if you need help. Consider the following case:

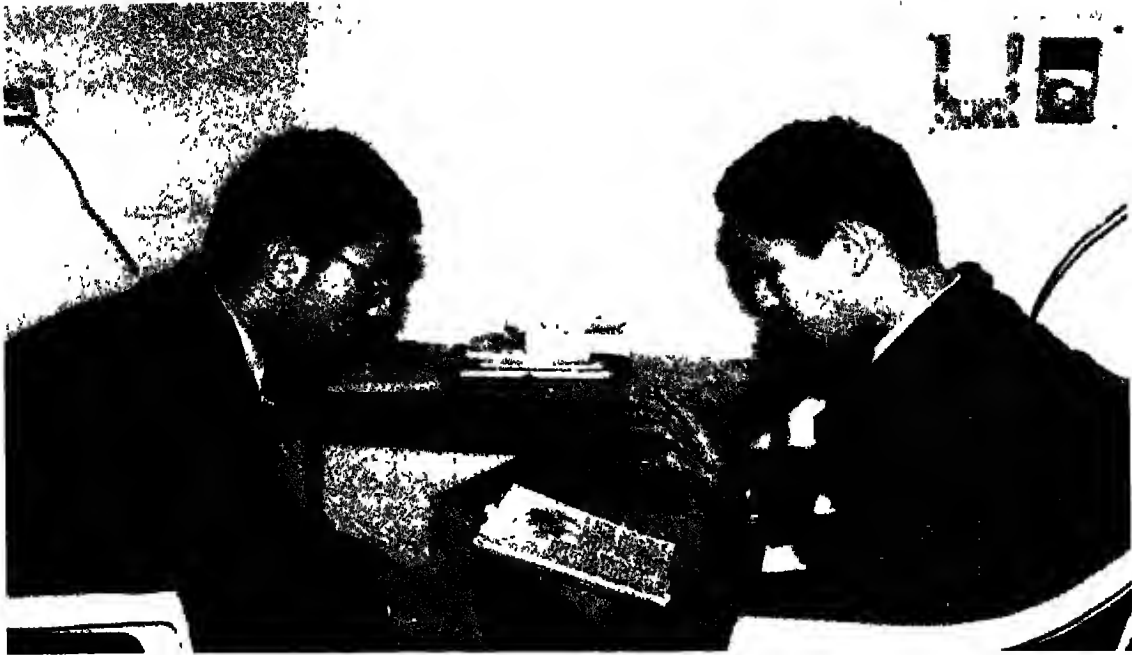
*Kamla was born with both her eyes shut. She was found to be blind. It became soon very clear that she would not be able to see. The doctors convinced the parents that no miracle could cure her. The parents, with the help of a voluntary organization planned her learning experiences at home. The specialist from the voluntary organization visited Kamla's house and trained the parents on how to meet Kamla's needs. The parents taught Kamla to move about, eat and dress on her own, and tie her shoelaces etc. This was all possible only with the help of the specialist.*

*At the age of four, Kamla was admitted to a regular school nearby. The voluntary organization helped the parents in getting admission for Kamla in that school. Because of the parents' involvement the teacher got good information about the SEN of Kamla. Gradually, Kamla learned to read and write Braille with the help of the specialist from the voluntary organization. Her parents are still involved and help her as much as possible at home.*



Many problems can be sorted out easily, especially if they are known and dealt with quickly. Sometimes, the school may require help of an outside specialist and be willing to make arrangements. Sometimes, you may have difficulty in taking the child to the school if s/he has a locomotor problem or is unable to see etc. In that case, the school can help you in arranging an escort or some conveyance by talking to the local authorities. Your child may also require help in school for going to the toilet etc. The school must find ways of helping each child whenever possible.





## **Problems of Adolescent**

Adolescence is a stage when children become rebellious and assertive with their parents. The influence of the peer group is much more than that of the parents during this stage. A number of changes occur in the child during this period. A few of these have been mentioned:

### **Emotional Development**

The social and emotional changes during adolescence lead to a changed attitude and feeling towards the members of the opposite sex. Along with daydreaming, and fantasizing, love is a very dominant feeling during this time. The parents have to understand their child's interests to be able to guide him/her to achieve his/her aspirations. They should also help him/her to understand his/her own self. It is the duty of the parents to prevent the child in getting involved in something that is not beneficial for him/her. For example parents can from the very beginning teach the child to maintain distance from





others while interacting whenever it is necessary. This will prevent anybody taking undue advantage of the child.

## **The Associated Problems**

### ***Depression & Suicide***

We have all been reading in newspapers about how persons rejected in love or those who did badly in exams have ended their lives. In fact, because of this phenomena help lines have sprung up all over the metropolitan cities. Both governmental and non-governmental agencies are running help lines for handling emotional problems of the youth. Sometimes because of depression the students may also get involved in drug and alcohol abuse.

The parents must help their adolescent child to understand his/her positive strengths. Rather than having feelings of despair the child must feel secure and think of alternative solutions to his/her problems.

During this period boys and girls also become interested in the opposite sex. If physically they have actual or fancied deformities they imagine themselves unattractive. Members of opposite sex may rebuke them and this may lead to emotional bruises. Parents can behave like a friend to the child and try to develop a habit of open communication at home. The child must trust you and open his/her heart to you. You must listen to his/her anxiety and also be willing to help. Don't blame, abuse or ridicule the child. Give him/her a patient listening in a peaceful environment. Let him/her feel safe with you.

The parents can help their child to-

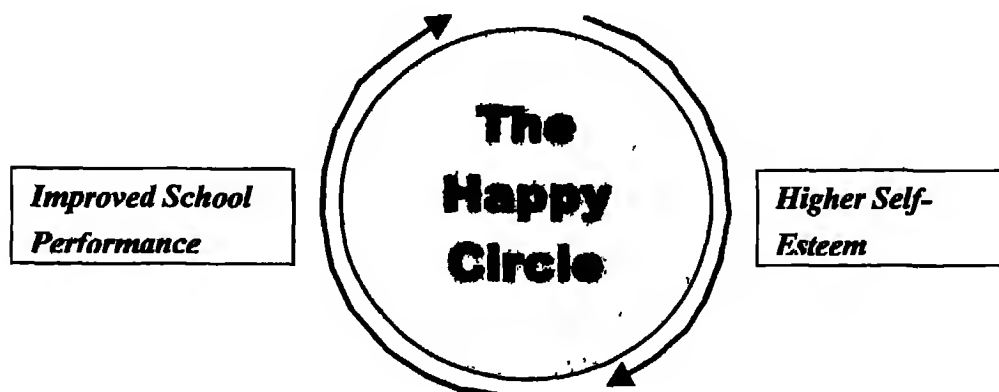
- Get involved in creative works and artistic activities.
- Play more games and sports
- Get involved in social work and religious pursuits.



This will help the child to channelize his/her sexual energy. The parents as well as teachers should provide proper guidance. Parents must read extra material on the physical changes like menstruation in girls and premenstrual stress. This will help them to guide their girls during this stressful period. Parents can also teach the children not to perform certain activities in public places. Since there are a number of emotional tensions and anxiety experiences during this period it has been rightly called a period of Storm & Stress.

## **Self Esteem/ Self Concept**

Students at the upper elementary level are at a very crucial level of development. The images they have of themselves broaden out and their interaction with other leads to the formulation of an image about themselves. It is important to have a positive and accurate image of oneself as it affects success in every sphere of life. Self-concept, self esteem, self-image are all words used to define a person's perception of himself/herself including his/her appearance, abilities, attitudes etc. The following figure illustrates the relationship of school performance with self-esteem.



### **The happy circle**

Source: Lawrence, D. (1996) *Enhancing Self-Esteem in the classroom*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, London: Paul Chapman, Publishing.



The behaviour of the person is guided by the self-concept a person holds about himself/herself. A person who feels inferior, insecure or incompetent has less confidence and behaves differently from other persons. On the other hand, the person who is confident and secure may exhibit a totally different behaviour.

Self-concept is generally the result of interactions the person has with others around him/her. It is based on the way others react towards us or the feedback we receive from others. We may interact with a number of persons in our daily life. We are, however, most affected by only those who are close to us or whose opinion matters to us.

Parents and teachers have the greatest influence on children's self-concept/self-esteem. Children's experience of being loved and lovable during the early years also influences the formation of their self-concept and self-esteem. Harris Clemes and Reynold Bean have defined the following four conditions that must be fulfilled in order for a high sense of self-esteem to be developed and maintained.

**Connectiveness**, that results when a child gains satisfaction from associations that are significant to the child and the importance of these associations has been affirmed by others.

**Uniqueness**, that occurs when a child can acknowledge and respect the qualities or attributes that make him/her special and different, and receives respect and approval from others for these qualities.

**Power**, that comes about through having the resources, opportunity, and capability to influence the circumstances of his/her own life in important ways.

**Models**, that reflect a child's ability to refer to adequate human, philosophical, and operational examples that serve to help him/her establish meaningful values, goals, ideals and personal standards.



## Practical suggestions for improving your child's self esteem

You can easily observe your child and assess whether s/he has high or low self-esteem. The following table will give you some idea (Pierangelo & Jacoby, 1996):

Children with High Self Esteem	Children with Low Self Esteem
Feel capable of influencing another's opinion or behaviors in a positive way	Listen to other's judgment rather than their own. Have very little feeling of power and control
Be able to communicate feelings and emotions in a variety of situations	Communicate self-derogatory statements
Behave independently	Become easily defensive
Approach new situations in a positive manner	Be resistant to new situations and experiences
Exhibit a high level of frustration tolerance	Exhibit a low frustration tolerance
Take on and assume responsibility	Constantly blame others for their failures and problems
Keep situations in proper perspective	Lose perspective easily (blow things out of proportion)
Communicate positive feelings	Be unwilling to reason
Be willing to try a new situation without major resistance	Avoid any situation that creates tension

You can contribute a lot in building up in your child positive image of himself or herself in your child. The following suggestions can be helpful:

- ◆ **Be solution oriented:** Always try to find solutions for your child's problems rather than blaming him/her for everything that goes wrong. In this way the child grows up in an environment that helps him/ her to learn to solve problems even on his/her own. Instead of always saying you should not have said this or you should have not done this you must make statements like " Lets not bother about whose fault is this. Lets first solve the problem the best way we can."





- ◆ **Allow the child to make decisions:** A child feels a sense of control if they are allowed to make decisions about their daily life routine.
- ◆ **Build an emotional vocabulary for your child:** The child should be able to communicate his/her emotions well. This is important for your child as it makes him/her understand his/her angry, frustrating and loving moments. You can clarify the child's feelings by labeling his/her emotions.
- ◆ **Condition children to use alternatives in handling different situations:** Children must have a repertoire of solutions for different situations. This will help them to avoid frustration.
- ◆ **Allow children to disagree with you:** Allow the child to discuss his/her views regarding the line of action being taken in different situations. Freedom to agree or disagree makes the child more involved in a particular situation.
- ◆ **Let the child repeat his/her successful experiences:** If your child has successfully completed some task you must allow him/her to repeat this experience. For example, if the child has cooked well let him/her to cook again. Positive experiences of this kind help in raising the self-esteem of the child.
- ◆ **Help the child set realistic goals:** sometimes a child may want to achieve something his/her sibling has achieved without being realistic. As a result, the child will fall short of success and suffer from lowering of self-esteem. Help your child to set up realistic goals for himself/herself and help him/her to achieve them. It is easier to achieve a series of short goals rather than one final goal only.
- ◆ **Let your child master the environment:** If you overprotect the child and keep changing his/her environment so that s/he does not feel frustrated you are trying to make your child dependent on you. Let your child face all situations and even face frustrations so that s/he learns to face challenges and develop positive self-esteem.
- ◆ **Reward your Child:** Rewards make a child happy and also makes him/her understand what s/he should do. Rewards can be in the form of patting with approval, taking the child out for some recreation, praising the child and even writing a note of approval.



## **DEVELOPMENT STAGES (during Adolescent)**

The Developmental stages manifest general tendencies but they do not necessarily describe a particular child.  
The stages may overlap.

**Early adolescence:** Onset of puberty, female ages 8-12;  
Male ages 10-14.

Starts to move to peers

Vacillates between clinging and rebellion

Strives for independence

May be confused, preoccupied with body, wonders "Am I normal?"

May experiment with same-sex sexual behavior

Begins to think abstractly

**Middle adolescence:** Female ages 13-16, male ages 14-17  
(Defined by peer group).

Continues effort to establish separate identity from parents

Often becomes idealistic and altruistic

Interested in dating, exploring sex

Loves intensely, "desperately"

Continues to develop abstract thinking

**Late adolescence:** Female ages 16 and over, male ages 17 and over.

Declares independence

Establishes a set body image

Loves more realistically, develops commitment

Peer group becomes less important, more selective of friend

Develops more consistent framework of values, morals, ethics

Able to think abstractly

Defines life goals

*Source. Adolescent Education Physical aspect Module one. UNESCO Principal Regional Office for Asia & Pacific, Bangkok, 1991*





## **FAMILY INTERACTIONS**

### **Parents Talking**

- Doctors are very insensitive to our problems. They should receive proper training and communicate the problems to parents as soon as possible.
- We would have liked to contact the other parents with like problems. This is very helpful.
- We don't want our child to be hurt or teased. That is why I prefer putting my child in a special school.
- We face a number of daily hassles in educating our child. My child cannot walk and I have to carry him a long distance as the bus comes quite far from our house.



- My two children have problems in walking but still they travel a long distance to reach the special school, I don't want to send them to the Neighbourhood School because of teasing problem.
- My son, who is visually impaired, has to go to one school for regular education in the morning. In the afternoon he has to go to another school for resource support. He leaves the house at 7:00 A.M. and reaches back home at 8:30 P.M. He always remains tired and irritable and quarrels with all of us.
- I could not take my child to anybody's house fearing ridicule. Our social life and general relations with our friends and family members are affected.
- When you are a parent of a child with disability you don't want him to face anything that hurts him. Your whole life, social and professional and that of your family changes completely.
- Having a child with disability is the worst thing that can happen to anyone – the one thing that stays with you always. The pain never diminishes. You as a family have to be very tough.
- My in-laws blame me for giving too much attention to my child. They feel that I am neglecting the housework.
- My child is not doing well in academics. But she loves music and dancing. My in-laws and husband feel I have spoiled this child.
- My in-laws make me feel guilty for reproducing a child with disability. They think it's all my fault.
- We can't do much as a family. We have to plan our visits carefully so that one of us can stay at home with the child with disability while the other children can go out with the other parent.
- Looking after our child was a family affair. It drew us all together.





These remarks made by the parents clearly show that the birth of a child with SEN radically alters a family leading to changes in relationships, situations and finances. We must also realize that no family can work in isolation. The neighbourhood, children's schools, community supports, local work culture etc affect family. It is also affected by the national policies in the areas of economics and by socio-political climate. Some of the barriers felt by the family that restrict its involvement in the child's education are given below:

- Parents are poor and not have enough time to contribute. This is because earning two meals a day is much more important than helping the child with school
- Parents feel they have nothing to contribute as they are illiterate
- Parents don't know how they can help or contribute to their child's education
- Lack of transportation
- Teachers don't have time to talk to them
- Parents do not feel welcome at school
- Parents feel scared of offending the teacher

Let us now summarize some of the changes that can occur in the family:

## **Marital Relationships**

There is a possibility that the relationship between the spouses may undergo a change by having and caring for a child with SEN. The partners may come closer or may become distant from one another. Some important points to remember are:

- Parents generally feel that they are never looked at or met in a normal way. This is very hurtful and causes a lot of despair and resentment.
- The mother, who usually spends more time taking care of the child and the whole family, feels a lot of stress. This may lead to changes in the marital relationships. Sometimes, the partners may come closer and share their grief together. Some may reject each other leading to quarrels, physical abuse and even separation.



- Most of the parents may long for a break from responsibility for a few hours and a chance to go together. It is important to find ways of taking sometime off together. In this context, the grand parents or aunts and uncles would be of great help.
- Most of the time the wife is blamed or singly held responsible for having a child with SEN. This may lead to a lot of resentment in her mind for her partner and in-laws.

To sum up, having a child with SEN can affect the relationship of husband and wife to a great extent. The effect may be in the form of intensifying a previously good relationship or worsening the already bad relationship. The parents should not hesitate in taking advice from a counselor, psychologist or any other in case they find their relationship suffering. Alternatively, they can also share their troubles with other parents having similar problems. The best way to solve the problem is to share it and learn from others' experiences.

## **Siblings**

The following are some of the issues regarding the relationship of the other children of the family with their parents and also with their sibling with SEN:

- The attitude of the parents regarding the involvement of the other children in taking care of the child with SEN has a tremendous effect on the practices of the family.
- The time, care and energy that have to be given to the child with SEN may deprive the other children of their parents' attention.
- The position of the child in the family also makes a difference. If s/he is eldest than the younger child/children may never be looked after and pampered.
- The other siblings may not be able to behave normally. They may always have to be caring, protective and very often they feel embarrassed because of this. They tend to take a back seat realizing that the needs of this child are much more than theirs.



- The other children may also realize the grief their parents are going through. This may have a significant affect on them.
- There is a possibility of family being split up. Sometimes the parents may have to take their child with SEN to various doctors and may be forced to leave their other child/children with grandparents or some other relations. This may lead to bitterness and feeling of neglect in the other child/children.
- The other children in the neighbourhood and their families can have a negative attitude and prejudices towards the family having a child with SEN. This can destroy the social relationships, as the siblings may fear bringing a friend home because of the attitude of the friend's parents.
- Parents may expect their other child/children to be more understanding because s/he sees the coping up devices being used by the parents.
- Parents may sometimes have unrealistic expectations from their child with SEN leading to involving him/her in more and more activities with the siblings. This may sometimes embarrass the siblings.

Conclusively the relationship of the parents with their other children is subjected to a lot of strain. Most parents should try to do as much as they can do to keep the situation as normal as possible. The other children may learn from this situation to be extra caring and understanding. In fact, having other children in the family may give the parents an opportunity to divert their attention from their child with SEN and also seek help from other children while taking care of this child.

## **Other Relationships**

In addition to the parents and siblings there may be other members of the family like the grand parents, aunts, uncles and cousins living in the same house or nearby. Birth of a child with SEN may have an affect on the relationships with the other members of the family in the following way:



## **Role of Grandparents**

Neugarten & Weinstein, 1964 suggested the following 5 ways of grand parenting across cultures:

- ❖ Formal grandparents express strong interest in the grandchild but maintain a hands-off attitude towards child rearing.
- ❖ Fun seeking grandparents see themselves as a source of fun for their grand children but avoid more serious interactions.
- ❖ Distant grandparents have little contact with children except as part of holidays or other family celebrations.
- ❖ Dispensing family wisdom grandparents provide information and advice to parents and child alike.
- ❖ Surrogate parent grandparents assume many of the normal roles and responsibilities of a parent.

An ideal Indian family is portrayed as a mother, father and 1,2 or 3 children. Alternatively, the family may include grandparents and other relatives. On the other hand, there may be single parent families. All these family configurations have a single goal: nurturing children and helping them to become full-fledged adult members of their culture.

The other relationships in the family can be affected in the following ways:

- Some grandparents may be unable to accept the full extent of the problems, a child and his/her parents may face. They may express sympathy but keep on repeating that s/he will be O.K. and the parents need not be worried.
- The grandparents may reject the child's presence and send gifts and talk to other children in the family.
- Relationship of the parents with their friends may also undergo a tremendous change. They may become closer or more distant. It has generally been seen closer friends become closer and the casual acquaintances may keep away.
- The parents may withdraw from friends because of lack of time. Attending to the needs of the child may require extra time and energy on the part of the parents.





- Sometimes the parents may withdraw from friends and relatives because of fear of adverse reactions from them.
- Parents may also feel embarrassed because of destructive or bizarre behaviour of the child; like in the case of child with intellectual disability. The unkind comments made by other people may make the matter worse.
- Parents getting hurt by tactless remarks and aware of the limited opportunities for their child with SEN may sometimes get involved with existing voluntary organizations, societies or start their own voluntary organization. This way they get involved in activities that bring benefits to all children with SEN in the neighbourhood and in the entire country.
- Feeling of remoteness from friends and community at large may also happen. This is especially true if others feel embarrassed and distressed about the situation. Parents may like to keep avoiding other people because of the stigma attached to disability.

Children and young persons with SEN may sometimes alter the dynamics of family life to a great extent. The changes in the family structure may start with reaction of the parents to the child with SEN that may affect the siblings in the family. Gradually, as the time passes, the parents go through different phases of their reactions and the relationship with siblings' further changes.

The more parents actively support their child with SEN and spend more time in constructive action the more favourable is the influence on the child and his/her siblings. The siblings develop a positive attitude towards their brother or sister with SEN and also develop a problem-solving skill that enhances their own adjustments. The faster parents move from shock reaction to constructive action the better is the overall adjustment of the family





## **Questions Frequently Asked**

**Q1** Do you think that our child can go to a mainstream school?

**Ans.** Every child is different and unique in his /her own way. Your child is also like any other child except s/he has some SEN. There are two options available for your child's education. There is a special school and there is the local mainstream school. A special school is a school, which is meant only for children with particular disability. These schools may be day care or residential. We have school for the visually impaired, hearing impaired, mentally challenged and orthopaedically disabled. We also have schools where children with more than one impairment study like the deaf-blind. In the case of a mainstream school, you must find out if the local school has some resources or can arrange these resources for meeting the SEN needs of your child. It is always better for the child to study in an environment where s/he feels happy and grows holistically. You must assess for yourself, which is a better environment for your child. If a special school is much



away from your house and you want your child to stay with you then you must try to admit him/her in the local school.

**Q2** Is it worth educating our child with disabilities?

**Ans.** Your child is like any other child except s/he has some SEN. In case of other children even if they don't get much of teachers' attention they can study on their own. But your child needs special attention and good quality education to become independent in life. S/he also need to be well educated to be a role model for such members of the community who still consider children having SEN a burden on the society. Education is an engine for empowerment and you must give your child proper opportunity for education like any of his/her siblings.

**Q3** How can parents help if they are not trained for looking after their child with SEN?

**Ans.** The parents are important source of inspiration to the child and the child's teachers. The care and nurturance they provide and the interactions they have not only with their child but also with the teachers play an important role in educational achievements of their child. Parents can also get together and form pressure groups and act as advocates for their children. This is especially true in our country where teacher pupil ratio is very high and teachers sometimes are unable to pay individual attention to the children.

**Q4** Would the other children in the regular school tease our child?

**Ans.** The other children in the school may tease your child if they have not interacted much with children having SEN. It is important that you must take the teacher in confidence and ask her/him to prepare the other children in the class before your child starts going to the school. If the teacher shows respect for your child then all the other children in the class will take a cue from this and will show respect for your child.



**Q5** What will be the future of our child with SEN?

**Ans.** The future of your child would depend upon how well s/he has been able to develop through the educational process in the school and how you have supported him/her through this process. Having high but realistic expectations from the child is important. In fact, with appropriate educational inputs and adequate training techniques even children having severe disabilities can gain employment. With the advent of Persons with disabilities Act, there have been reservations in the educational institutions (government) and even in the public/government sector organizations for persons with disability. The future of your child is therefore as bright as that of any other child.

**Q6** Why is our child so aggressive?

**Ans.** Children having SEN may sometimes show-

- Aggressive and disruptive behaviours
- Rebellious and disobedient behaviours
- Repetitive behaviour
- Temper tantrums and obstinacy
- Self –injurious behaviors etc.
- Lack of communication

This may cause immense concern to the parents. You may feel worried about how to look after the child and handle his/her behaviour. You may feel anxious and worried about such behaviour. There may be a number of reasons for such behavioural problems. The child may be:

- ❑ Unable to cope up with demands and hassles of everyday life
- ❑ Stressed and tired because of overload of work and more effort required on his/her part as compared to his/her peers
- ❑ Rejected by the members of the society
- ❑ Having a negative self concept or low self esteem

2



You as parents have to understand your child's problems and support him/her as far as possible. If you know the cause of the problem then you can help your child in solving the problem. You must gently make your child understand the distinction between the right and wrong behaviour, acceptable and non-acceptable behaviour. You must handle with firmness but gently. Don't aggravate the situation and avoid confrontations. You must give time to the child to modify his/her misguided behaviour and praise him/her for the modified behaviour.

**Q7** How can we improve our child's life?

**Ans.** Parents have a very significant role to play in their child's life. The time they can spare for their child, the resources they can mobilize, the attitudes they have, the characteristics of the family, all this contribute to the child's development. Parents are actually permanent teachers and know their child better than anybody else. Not only they can help the child gain access to proper education through collaborating with the teacher but also support the child emotionally. Parents can also advocate for their child and help in forming parents' associations with other parents for the betterment of the life of all children.

**Q8** If our child does not do well in a regular school why shouldn't we put him/ her back in special school?

**Ans.** Admitting the child in special school or regular school entirely depends upon your own choice. If you feel that your child is not getting proper education and his/her needs are not being met in the environment of a regular school, then you must find out the reason for it in case you can help in that. But if you are unable to change the environment of the regular school you can consider putting the child in a special school only if you as parents feel that would be a better environment for your child.

**Q9** How do we convince the school principal about taking our child in the school?

**Ans.** If the school principal refuses admission to a child s/he may give reasons for it. Knowing well about the available provisions you can inform the principal about



these and seek his/her willingness to mobilize resources for your child. You can also offer your help if needed in meeting the needs of your child. You can also try to inform the principal about the Legislation even if it is only applicable to the government schools. Ultimately, whether the principal gives admission to the child will depend upon the attitudes s/he holds towards children with SEN. In case of a government school you can contact the commissioner appointed in your State for implementation of the PWD Act or even the chief commissioner

**Q10** Why should our child study in a special class even in a regular school?

**Ans.** Sometimes the child may not be the ready to attend a regular class with other students. S/he may need to develop some skills before s/he can participate in the curriculum. Sometimes it is also possible that the child disrupts the regular class because of some behavioral problems. It is however very clear that the child should study in a special class only if necessary. If you as parents feel that there is no reason for your child to study in a special class then you must take this matter up with the school authorities and explain the facts. You can insist on finding out the reasons for putting your child in a special class.

**Q11** My other child does not help his brother with SEN. What should I do?

**Ans.** It is important for the parents to involve their other children in the development process of the child and also inform them about his/her condition. However, the family must function as any other family-quarrel, argue, fight, help and tease etc. Support, love and companionship between brothers and sisters are very important. Siblings can provide a lot of support to the child having SEN if they are sensitized to the needs of the child having SEN. The parents must give them an important role to play in the development of the child with SEN. They must encourage the siblings to play with the child and support him/her. The children learn so much in behaviour etiquettes from each other inadvertently.



**Q12** Are there any specific signs through which we can know that our child has SEN?

**Ans.** Children with SEN are not a uniform group and may differ from each other in a number of ways. However there are some specific signs that can help the parents to early detect any problems in their child. These are given in the end of the guide.

**Q13** Who are the people who can provide help to parents if they have a child with SEN?

**Ans.** The child with SEN may require different services at different stages of his/her life. At the stage below five years the parents may require to work cooperatively with a team that may include a pediatricians, physiotherapists, special educators, psychologists, social worker etc. It is also important for parents to seek help of a professional to understand the kind of interventions they need to provide at home. The first few years of life are very important and the earlier the intervention starts the better it is for the child.

At the later stage in addition to the above professionals the parents may need to collaborate with the school teachers, counselors and even the educational administrators to help their child to progress in school.

**Q14** Does having a child with SEN in the family affect the other siblings (brother & sisters)?

**Ans.** Having a child with SEN may sometimes have adverse effect on other child/children in the family. The siblings may sometimes feel embarrassed because of their brother/sister being the way s/he is or if s/he shows socially unacceptable behaviour. Sometimes the parents may pressurize their other children to take care of their brother or sister with SEN. This may make them feel resentful towards this child. It is possible that the parents may be so engrossed in thinking about their child having SEN that they may neglect their other child/children. This may also affect the other siblings. Every child has some needs and every child requires the attention of his/her parents.



**Q15** What is the role a sibling can play in helping their brother or sister with SEN?

**Ans.** Siblings play a very important role in providing support to their brother/sister having SEN. They can have good relationships with each other and help their brother/sister to overcome any barriers that may come in his/her way. Parents need to sensitize the siblings about the needs of this child if they want support from them.

**Q16** Does my child need any prior training before going to school?

**Ans.** The child having SEN may need training in daily living/functional skills, communication skills, orientation and mobility skills etc. The parents must assess the needs of their child before s/he is sent to school. They must realize that early intervention is a must. The child should be ready to attend the school and may not feel educationally backward as far as possible. If the parents feel they can take help from a special school in building that readiness in their child, they should definitely do so.

**Q17** What are the factors of the family that can inhibit the growth and development of SEN child?

**Ans.** If the parents are not able to accept the fact that their child may have some problems and on account of this get into an emotional turmoil this may affect their child in an adverse manner. If all the time they keep blaming their fate for having a child with SEN this may lead to development of a negative self-concept and the child may blame himself/herself for his/her parents grievances. Acceptance will lead to finding out ways to deal with the problem. Depression will take you nowhere. You as parents must create a good and positive atmosphere in the house. Lack of professional help, poor facilities and lack of community support are some other factors that can inhibit the growth and development of the child.





**Q18** We tend to spend more time with our SEN child than with our other child. Will this have any negative effects?

**Ans.** If the other child understands that his/her brother or sister has some special needs that have to be met by parental support, s/he may not resent lack of attention from the parents. On the other hand, parents must also take care of the needs of their other child/children. If that is not done, the other children may start resenting their sibling with SEN.

**Q19** What are the benefits of early intervention?

**Ans.** There are a number of benefits of early intervention. Broadly one can say that the earlier the children with SEN are identified, preferably in the preschool years, the better it is for them. This gives an opportunity to know about their learning strengths and difficulties and to act upon them.

Early intervention after early detection is useful for both the child and his/her parents. It helps the child to develop skills that are necessarily important prerequisite for later learning. It also helps in providing the environment and opportunity to attain maximal potential.

It helps the parents to gain skills that will help them to stimulate their child leading to better learning environment. Early intervention also helps in providing counseling services to the parents if there is a need. It also helps in building acceptance of the child in the family

**Q20** How can parents help in the development of the child?

**Ans.** The first teachers in any child's life are his/her parents. So they should conduct themselves according to what they want their child to learn. Parents can really help their child to develop by-

- Planning early intervention programmes with the help of specialists



- Providing assistance, information to the teachers in planning programmes for their child
- Motivating the child to perform the required skills and behaviour at school and in the house
- Building up a positive self concept in the child
- Counseling the child if there is a need
- Having high but meaningful expectations from the child and providing support whenever necessary
- Helping their child to interact socially with the community members

These are some of the ways the parents can provide help to the child. Parental support for the development of the child will depend upon the needs of the child. For example, you can help your child to interact with other children and you can teach your child to share and care.

**Q21** What is a special school?

**Ans.** Special schools are schools that are run by the government and also by voluntary organization and cater to the needs of a particular disability. There are schools for the mentally challenged children, children with visual, hearing impairments etc. These schools may be daytime or residential schools.

**Q22** What is inclusive education?

**Ans.** Inclusion has been defined as the acceptance of all pupils within the regular education system, taught within a common framework, and identified as the responsibility of the school. In other words it means every child has a right to be in a regular school and should be provided equal opportunities to gain access to the curricular and extracurricular activities in the school. If a child has SEN, it is not a deficiency and his/ her needs have to be met by the school system in a way that this child achieves upto his/her potential.



**Q23** What are the benefits of inclusive education?

**Ans.** In inclusive education we are not talking about teachers reacting to the defects of individual students but about teachers and management of schools being proactive in creating an environment in which all can learn together. Inclusive education is thus all about responding to diversities and listening to the voices of all. Inclusive education is about developing values of mutual self-respect and dignity and building trusts and creating an inclusive society. It is not limited to physical integration but also extends to social inclusion of students with SEN.

In the school situation it is equally important for the peers to learn how to interact with each other. It is also important for the peers to understand that inspite of SEN there are a lot of strengths students can hold and there are a number of weaknesses students without SEN may hold. This helps in building up relationships and community acceptance.

**Q24** How can a teacher teach all children having unique needs in the class of an inclusive school?

**Ans.** The teacher needs to be flexible in her teaching methods when s/he is dealing with a class having children with and without special needs. S/he may have to use methods that involve multilevel grouping, peer-to-peer teaching, cooperative learning etc. She may plan her lessons according to the profile of her classroom. She can take the help of a special teacher if she wants to know more about the children with SEN before planning her/his lessons.

**Q25** Do the children with SEN follow a different curriculum?

**Ans.** No children with SEN are transacted the same curriculum as other children. However, greater flexibility has to be accepted in the curriculum content, delivery, pace of instructions and evaluation to match the diverse needs of all students. There could be five options available:



- There could be students in the class who may require no adaptations/modifications in the curriculum.
- There may be students who may require reinforcement of the content through educational aids to understand some concepts. For example, tactual maps, models, large print material, extra practice, study guides, alternative instructional methods, parental or sibling involvement.
- There may be students who may require some adaptations in the content, simpler language, simpler concepts, altered pace of instruction, modification in tests, and change in the mastery requirements.
- There may be some who may require parallel content or supplementary material and finally
- There may be some who may require alternative activities. For example there may be mentally challenged who may not be able to participate in academic curriculum but would be able to participate in work experiences or some other activities.

**Q26** Does the environment in a special school have adverse effect on the children?

**Ans.** Special schools are excellent places for learning, yet they have some disadvantages. A major disadvantage is the separation of the child with SEN from other students who may not have SEN. This leads to loss of opportunities to learn from the peers and setting up higher goals for oneself. Sometimes, special schools may lead to the isolation of the child from the real world or one's community. If your child is going to a special school, it is important to provide him/her with opportunities to interact with more and more students and other persons from the community. You must realize that ultimately, your child will return back to the real world once s/he finishes schooling.

**Q27** How can a special teacher help a parent?

**Ans.** A special teacher can help a parent in a number of ways. S/he can:

- Give parents some home based training for early intervention





- ❑ Give parents training for how to provide on going support to the child during schooling
- ❑ Give knowledge about various developments in the field of SEN
- ❑ Help in bringing in contact with other parents who have similar problems with a view to share their problems and learn from one another's experience
- ❑ Give information about the services available for the child
- ❑ Provide counseling and guidance to the parents if there is a need

**Q28** How frequently the parents should visit the teachers?

**Ans.** This depends entirely on the unique needs of their child, the competencies of the teacher, the need for support and the parent teacher meetings organized by the school authorities. The parents must visit the teacher at least once a month. They should however definitely meet whenever they think that their child is not developing the way s/he should be developing in school.

**Q29** Is it that punishment should not be used with children having SEN?

**Ans.** It is important to discipline every child including children with SEN. The child must be treated like any other child except for the SEN for which s/he may require some support. Also the punishment should depend on child's understanding level and his type of disability.

**Q30** My child does not want to study but is good in other activities like drawing and singing. What should I do?

**Ans.** You must find out the reasons for his/her not being interested in studies. You as parents need to motivate and encourage the child in all spheres in his/her life. If your child may be facing some problems in studies you must assist the teacher in resolving them. You must assess the child's performance in academics and his/her capability. This may give you a clue to his/her disinterest or non-performance. If you feel that your child is stressed out with studies or has problems in competing with others or is not getting due attention of the teacher you must resolve the problem with the help of psychologist and the teacher or any one else who has an



influence on your child. Also, if after assessment you find that your child is not able to perform at a particular academic level then s/he should be allowed to participate or channelize in his/her area of interest.

**Q31** Would our child be able to earn a living?

**Ans.** With proper education and training the child with SEN will be able to achieve a living like any other persons. There are many good role models in the society who have achieved a lot inspite of special needs. What is important is to have high expectations from the child and communicate these expectations to the educational authorities. Also it is important to provide support to your child so that s/he can become independent and capable to earn a living.

**Q32** How can we change the negative attitude of others towards our child?

**Ans.** If you give full support to your child s/he will develop and achieve like any other child. His/her achievements would serve as a foundation for changing attitudes of others surrounding him/her. His successes would benefit his/her entire society and s/he will serve as a messenger for his/her group. It is therefore important to help your child to attain successful experiences whenever s/he can so that the society comes to know of his/her capabilities. Never criticize your child in public. Instead, show confidence in his/her achievements and praise him/her in public.

**Q33** How can I build better relations of my child with the neighbourhood children?

**Ans.** The children in the neighbourhood may sometimes refuse to mix with children with SEN. In that case the parents should take some initiative in inviting over the children. The parents can also use this opportunity for explaining about their child to other children. Sometimes the parents can organize group games in order to help their child to mix with others. They can also talk to the parents of the other children to help their child to develop some friendships in the neighbourhood.



# **Checklist for the Identification of Children with SEN**

## **Visual Impairment**

1. Does the child have observable deformity in the eye?
2. Do eyes of the child water frequently?
3. Do eyes of the child become red frequently?
4. Does the child rub eyes very frequently?
5. Does the child blink frequently?
6. Does the child complain about pain in eyes frequently?
7. Does the child cover one eye and tilts the head forward?
8. Does the child walk with head downward?
9. Does the child frequently bumps into objects, which are waist high only on one side or below knee level?
10. Does the child keep books very close to the eyes for reading?
11. Does the child very frequently ask other children when taking down notes from the black board?
12. Does the child complain about headache following close eye work?

## **Speech & Hearing Impairment**

13. Does the child have observable deformity in ear(s)?
14. Does the child complain of pain in ears frequently?
15. Does the child have discharge from one or both ears?
16. Does the child scratch ears frequently?
17. Does the child have to turn his head frequently?
18. Does the child have to turn his head frequently towards the speaker making an effort to hear well?
19. Does the child frequently request the teacher to repeat directions?
20. Does the child make errors, particularly of vowel sounds, in taking dictation?



21. While listening, does the child watch teachers face carefully to get a clue about what he is speaking?
22. Does the child frequently look at the notebook of the child sitting near to him to copy notes on teachers lecture?
23. Does the child have observable deformity in the mouth?
24. Does the child have frequent unnatural breaks in speech?
25. Does the child omit sounds in words or phrases when speaking?
26. Does the child stammer frequently?
27. Does the child frequently mispronounce despite corrective effort of the teacher making it difficult to understand speech?
28. Is it difficult to understand the speech when speaking to the child?

### **Loco motor Problems**

29. Does the child has observable deformity in:  
Neck?  
Hands?  
Fingers?  
Waist?  
Legs?
30. Does the child have difficulty in:  
Sitting?  
Standing?  
Walking?
31. Does the child have difficulty in picking up, holding objects and putting them on the ground?
32. Does the child frequently complain of pains in the joints?
33. Does the child have difficulty in holding a pen while writing?
34. Does the child walk with jerks?
35. Does the child have involuntary movement of limbs?
36. Does the child have amputee limbs?





## **Lower level of Intellectual Functioning**

37. Does the child have difficulty in doing things herself/himself like eating, dressing, bathing, grooming?
38. When you tell the child to do something, does she/he seem to have difficulty in understanding what you are saying?
39. Does the child appear dull or slow in any manner as compared to children of his/her age?
40. Compared with other children of his/her age, does the child seem to have difficulty in learning to do things?
41. Does the child have difficulty in understanding abstract things?
42. Does the child seek more repetition and practice for learning than other children of her/his age?
43. Does the child take more time in learning a particular skill or task as compared to other children of his/her age?
44. Does the child show too much dependence on concrete examples for learning?
45. Does the child participate in most classroom activities as other children of his/her age do?

## **Learning Disability**

46. Does the child not read well enough although his oral answers are intelligent?
47. Does the child make mistakes in spellings omitting letters in words ('rember' instead of 'remember')?
48. Does the child make mistakes in spellings by changing places of letters ('pat' instead of 'tap' 'felt' instead of 'left')?
49. Does the child write numbers wrong ('12' as '21')?
50. Does the child read numbers wrong ('6' as '9' '3' as '8')?
51. Is the child frequently so excited that he is unable to complete any task?
52. Does the child frequently omit words or lines in reading?



53. Does the child read individual letters in words, but has difficulty in putting the sounds of letters together (may sound 'b/e/g' and say 'bad' or sound 'f/o/g' and say 'frog')?
54. In reading, does the child guess words?
55. While writing does the child write shabbily and fail to write in straight lines?
56. Does the child not do well in examination although he/she is clever and has no physical disability?
57. Does the child look distracted and not remember the timetable frequently?

**Note:** If the answer to four or more of the questions is 'Yes' the child needs to be assessed.

*Source. Jangira, N.K. Ahuja, A, Kaur, C Sitra, A. 1990 Functional Assessment Guide, National Council of Educational Research & Training*



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